

I'm Known by How I've Grown, Part 7 - 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 – July 13th, 2014

- Today's teaching will be part seven of a series I've titled, "I'm Known by How I've Grown."
- As we now come to the end of chapter three, we see the Apostle Paul putting his finger on another consequence of their carnal immaturity.
- It seems that for good reason, Paul is not about to let up with the rebukes in this corrective epistle. This because of what is at stake here.

- Namely, that of the destruction that always ensues when a church body is given over to the carnality vis-à-vis a worldly spiritual immaturity.
- Perhaps better said, a carnal Christian and a church filled with carnal Christians have the propensity to utterly destroy God's sacred temple.
- We know from our study of verses 16-17, that God's sacred temple is God's church, which is made up by a body of born again believers.

- The reason I mention this is because it's important we understand that these are believers Paul is referring to and not wolves as in Acts 20.
- In other words though these believers bring destruction to God's church, which in turn brings God's destruction to them, they are still saved.
- God may deem it fit to take them to heaven by way of their untimely death as they escape the flames burn, which their wood hay and straw.

- Actually, I'm of the belief that it is for this very reason that we have an intense passage such as this recorded on the pages of our Bibles.
- Let me explain, when we grasp the intensity and enormity of a rebuke such as this, it becomes a catalyst of sorts to searching our hearts.
- Then, in the process of the Holy Spirit searching our hearts, we're able to see if we are guilty of this whether it's knowingly or unknowingly.

- I would suggest that in the remainder of this gnarly chapter, we can identify, by the Holy Spirit, no less than three ways we could be guilty.

1st - I can destroy a church by being self-deceived (Verse 18)

- Here Paul says don't deceive yourself. Anyone fancying themselves wise by the standards of this age needs to become a fool to be wise.

2nd - I can destroy a church with my worldly wisdom (Verses 19-20)

- Paul quotes Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11 to say worldly wisdom is foolishness to God. He catches the wise in their crafty folly, which is futility.

3rd - I can destroy a church with self-exaltation (Verses 21-23)

(21) So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, (22) whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, (23) and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

- v21 Paul gives them the bottom line saying in light of all of this, there should be no more boasting about men because all things are all ours.
- v22-23 He says whether Paul, Apollos, Peter, the world, life, death, the present or future, it's all ours; we're of Christ, and Christ is of God.
- In other words stop destroying God's church in your arrogant pride by diminishing others in order to exalt yourself over and above others.

- You'll forgive my making reference to this once again, but this is textbook when it comes to the destruction "discernment ministries" cause.
- Let me explain, these so called "discernment ministries" seem to falsely accuse godly ministries and ministers in order to exalt themselves.
- Perhaps better said, destruction comes by tearing down the Apollos ministry in order to posture and lift themselves up as the go to experts.

- Last week we talked about how when this worldliness gets into a church, God's Word goes out of the church, which will destroy the church.
- I point this out again because so too is this true with the division in and the destruction to a church body at the hands of those who do this.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was the most destructive dynamics in the church today, this would certainly be at the top of the list.

- Here's why, when the world witnesses a divisive and destructive church they get so turned off by it, such that they see no difference from it.
- By that I mean, when the church acts no different from the world, the world will come to the conclusion that the church has nothing to offer.
- If this weren't bad enough mature Christians won't want anything to do with that church, which is why they leave and find a different church.

- While I in no way wish to excuse the reason that this happens, I would like to explain one reason why this happens; Satan knows scripture.
- Satan knows the Word of God better than any can know the Word of God, and it's evidenced by the devices he uses to destroy a church.
- This is why the Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 2:11, warns this Corinthian church to not be ignorant of Satan's devices, lest he outwits us.

- Here's where I'm going with this, Satan, who knows we'll be known as disciples by our love one for another, gets us to turn on each other.
- So much so that we end up cooperating with the Devil by doing his work, which enables him to take the day off and watch the destruction.
- You'll forgive the way I'm saying this, but I do so because of what the Apostle Paul would also write in his epistle to the churches in Galatia.

Galatians 5:15 NIV If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

- I find it most interesting that four verses later this rises to the level of Paul including it with other sinful practices such as sexual immorality.

Galatians 5:19-21 NIV The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (20) idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions (21) and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- This begs the question of why dissensions discord and divisions would be included in such a list. However Proverbs provide us our answer.

Proverbs 6:16-19 NIV There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: (17) haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, (18) a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, (19) a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

- At the risk of an oversimplification as to what we can do to avoid this from happening to us or our church, I'll close with 2 Timothy 2:23-26.

2 Timothy 2:23-26 NIV Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. (24) And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. (25) Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, (26) and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.